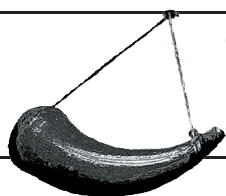


BECAUSE OUR HISTORY MATTERS



Prairie Gazette

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2009



Little Church on the Prairie

Celebrating 70 years of service in Lakewood

The year was 1937. The place was an expanse of open prairie covered with Scotch broom and flowing quack grass. It was a small country store; a combination grocery and hardware store. It stood alone in the middle of several hundred acres of land that had been purchased by Norton Clapp. The area was well known to many Tacomans because it was close to the nearby shores and beaches of Steilacoom, Gravelly and American Lakes that people came to get away from life in the “big city”. The little store on the prairie is where they purchased needed items for a weekend at the lake.



Little Church on the Prairie as it appeared in 1938

The main purpose for Mr. Clapp’s purchase was to develop a shopping center, later named Lakewood Community Center. The little store was a part of that purchase, but it was not included in the original design of the center.

At the urging of his wife, Mary, that little store would be transformed into the beginnings of what is now known as “The Little Church on the Prairie”. The Clapps (especially Mary, who was an architect) and a

small group of area residents met in the basement of the Lakewood Theater and created the church’s initial design and decor with a strong preference to keep the building in conformity with the colonial appearance of the buildings in the shopping center. The single-story feature was retained, and the group’s thinking flowed into creation of a small, white building resembling what might be considered a

New England-style country church. Can you picture the church’s nave originally being the hardware department of a small store and the choir room and vestibule being a grocery store? The building, the congregation, and God’s presence created a warm, comfortable atmosphere that attracted a large portion of the populace and marked the beginning of extraordinary

See **LITTLE CHURCH** Page 4



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Prairie Gazette

Prairie Gazette is the official publication of the Lakewood Historical Society. The newsletter is published four times a year. Distribution is directly to members and available at the Lakewood Historical Museum, 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr. SW, Lakewood, WA 98499

The staff of Prairie Gazette actively encourages input from the Society's members as well as the general public regarding story ideas or any other aspects of this newsletter and the Lakewood Historical Society.

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MEETINGS

The Lakewood Historical Society formed in 1998 to preserve and share Lakewood's rich history through programs, displays and publications. The Society offers frequent programs on topics of historical interest. Most programs are free and open to the public. Visit the website for information on events and activities.

www.lakewoodhistorical.org

EDITOR

Dave Sclair
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President's Message

I am breathing a sigh of relief because the efforts of our members and community have ensured the operation of our museum for another year. This has been accomplished with donations for the Museum Fund, a renegotiated lease with Gramor Properties and restructuring of our grant money from the City.

Now the real work begins. It is not enough for us to keep the museum open –we must have visitors. Right now only 35-40 people visit the museum every month. Many of them are members and local residents. In order for us to continue to get hotel/motel tax money from the city, we must show that we are getting visitors from out of town. If you have anyone coming to visit, please stop by the museum. Even if they don't know the area I'm sure they'll find something interesting. If you haven't visited the museum lately yourself, now would be a good time. We are very proud of what we have accomplished in our exhibits and displays.

In order for the Society to move forward in reaching its long term goals, it now requires more members to participate on our committees and in our activities. We no longer can just rely on the Board members to add additional responsibilities to their schedule. If everyone takes on a small part, fulfills one task, all of the work can be accomplished. All we ask is a minimum of two hours a month. You will find the tasks and jobs that need to be filled on page 6 of this newsletter.

We have reached the next step in our plans for the Mueller-Harkins Hangar to become our permanent museum. Clover Park Technical College has authorized us to do an in depth analysis of the building. BCRA, a Tacoma engineering and design firm, has been contracted to do the study. We will be reimbursed from the City grant money for this work. This study will determine the overall cost of upgrading the building to meet codes and converting it into a museum. Once that is determined we will seek a long term lease from the College and begin a capital fund raising campaign.

We have a bright future planned ahead for us but we must meet the challenges of our current operation to prove to our community that we have the resources to sustain it.

Looking forward to working with you on our activities.

Becky Huber

Eagle Scout project seeks to improve Old Settlers Cemetery

My name is Leavitt Castro, and I am a Life Scout with Troop 410 of the Boy Scouts of America. I am working on my Eagle Project to be completed by 2011. My project is to tear down the existing fence around the Gravelly Lake Old Settlers Cemetery and build a new one.

I am excited to be serving the community in which I have lived all my life, and want to make a difference in making Lakewood a beautiful place. I feel this cemetery, being on a main road, reflects to the people who drive by, just how we feel about those who settled this area and have passed on. I would like people to feel we have respect for those who have done so, but it is hard when the existing fence is such



an eyesore.

An Eagle Project is a volunteer project, and I am aware this is a large undertaking, but I would truly like to make a difference in the community. Hopefully I have chosen something the people of Lakewood also would like to see improved.

The new fence, as approved by the Pierce County Parks and Recreation Department, will be 4 ft black vinyl coated chain link. There will be two walk-in gates, a service gate and a drive-in gate. The cost of this new fence will be approximately \$20,000. Any extra funds raised will be used for landscaping.

I am soliciting donations from the community to help with the cost. The labor for the fence installation will be done by the Scouts and community volunteers.

I am also looking for any and all people who are interested in helping with the tear down of

the old fence, and the cutting and removing of the brush and vegetation along the back fence line. Anyone with professional experience in building chain link fences is welcome to offer their help and expertise with the project. All volunteers are welcome.

An account has been established at Sound Credit Union, 7717 Bridgeport Way W., Lakewood, as the "Old Settlers Cemetery Eagle Project". The account number is 123697. If you need to verify the authenticity of the project, feel free to call 383-2016, ext 6808. All donations are tax deductible. Please make checks out to:

Leavitt Castro
8315 Washington Blvd SW
Lakewood, WA 98498

Please feel free to call me for more information, volunteering or specific details concerning the project. My number is 253-581-3869 or e-mail legotrains@comcast.net.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,
Leavitt Castro, Troop 410



Little Church Continued from Page 1

growth.

At 10:00 am on Sunday, September 18, 1939, a church was created with 71 charter members. The pastor's monthly salary was \$100. On Saturday, members of the Jewish faith utilized the facility, and on Sundays a variety of Christian faiths (Roman Catholic, Evangelicals, etc.) could be found in worship.

The church, very early on, became an active participant in community affairs and was responsible for starting a Cub Scout Pack on September 1, 1939. That Cub Scout Pack is still active at The Little Church on the Prairie.

In 1943, Dr. William Perry McCormick accepted a call to serve as pastor and remained 17 years. His initial salary was \$3,000 per year and \$75 moving expense (the total operating budget was \$4,500). During this time, the congregation witnessed a rapid increase in membership and a much-needed expansion of the facilities. It was during Dr. McCormick's tenure that the Session embarked on a plan seeking to purchase the building and the land. The church had been paying \$20 per month for rent, but had fallen into arrears in the amount of \$1,000 for rent and utility bills. Mr. and Mrs. Clapp put forth 25% of the money needed to make
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the purchase. With great enthusiasm, the 92 remaining members subscribed and raised the balance of \$6,000!

The congregation almost doubled in size, and new demands for additional space were obvious. There was an urgent need for more Sunday School rooms and a place for a variety of fellowship gatherings, and work was started to meet those needs.



World War II caused a halt in the construction program, but congregation members continued their fund-raising activities for the future additions. In 1945, there were 171 members, and \$32,000 had been raised.

By war's end, the cost of the Sunday School building had skyrocketed from the initial budget figure of \$60,000 to \$90,000. To keep within the available fiscal resources, the Session eliminated one wing of the building plan and construction began immediately. In May of 1948, the new church school building was dedicated. Its colonial style served two purposes: to harmonize with the community architecturally,

and to be in keeping with the simplicity that was, and still is, characteristic of The Little Church on the Prairie. In January 1949, the church initiated sponsorship of Boy Scouts of America Troop 53.

Many changes were made during the years between 1949 and 1954. In 1949, Prairie Hall was erected and dedicated. In 1950, \$5,000 was raised toward expansion

of the sanctuary. The dream of "Operation Bulge" was closer to becoming a reality when Hall Construction Company won the bid. The seating capacity of the sanctuary was increased to 414, the ceiling of the sanctuary was raised two and a half feet, and the narthex was almost doubled in size. A choir room was added, and space for floral arranging and preparing for communion services was created. Shortly after the expansion project was completed two organs were installed.

From its beginning, The Little Church on the Prairie operated in accordance with Presbyterian policy and had Presbyterian ministers, but it did not become identified

officially as a Presbyterian Church until January 11, 1957.

By 1964, the church membership roll was over 900. Nursery facilities were provided for infants during services and a preschool program had been initiated. Various programs and ministry groups existed, reaching out to the people of the church and to the community; and benevolence giving created a worldwide ministry.

By 1966, over-crowding in the church school forced consideration of expansion to provide additional space to accommodate the increase. This ambitious expansion called for the church to add a library and reception room to the sanctuary building, enlarge Prairie Hall, build a new administration addition and remodel an existing education wing. The cost? A whopping \$225,000!

A unique plan was devised whereby church members would contribute \$1 per week for each \$1,000 per year of income for 156 weeks. The congregation could reach its goal of \$175,000, and a mortgage for the balance could be retired without putting a strain on the budget. In one year, enough money had been accumulated to begin construction. The new education wing was dedicated January 21, 1968, and was named McCormick Hall. The other revisions were made in 1969.



In the fall of 1968, The Little Church on the Prairie took on a new challenge by creating a cooperative nursery school. Small study groups were formed and seminars were conducted to nurture the parents of our nursery school children. A strong youth program following the “Youth Club” model, was begun, with annual mission trips for the senior high youth being a highlight. The childcare center opened in 1979, becoming one of the first to care for children less than a year old.

A gala evening event marked the 50th Anniversary of the Little Church on the Prairie in 1988. Prior to that big event, problems with the organ were experienced and the church was finding it increasingly difficult getting materials to refurbish the bellows and securing technicians capable of doing

the work. About the same time, it was noted that some of the roof areas needed attention, so a major effort was born.

Many times down through the years the necessary building maintenance had often been done at a less than desirable level due to finances at the time. In 1994, it was recognized that a revitalizing and modernization program was required.

Credits: This article is excerpted from the original “A Brief History of The Little Church on the Prairie” that was prepared in 1961 and was reproduced by the church’s Senior High Youth Club in 1981. It has been revised several times over the years to reflect major facility improvements. Photos are provided by Little Church on the Prairie.

Just like any good citizen that responds to the appeal of their country, our Society needs more volunteers to assist in meeting our goals. Listed below are jobs or tasks that need to be filled in order for us to move forward. Most of the committees will already have someone in charge. Your role will be to receive assignments and work with the Chairman. If you are on a committee it usually involves meeting on a regular basis to discuss the activity.

1. Museum Docent - We need at least 8 more people to take at least a two hour shift a month to greet visitors at the museum. On occasion you may assist in hosting a tour group.
2. Collections Cataloging - The donations we receive in the museum need to be cataloged. It entails listing items that have been received from donors and transcribing them. You can do this during your regular docent shift.
3. Exhibit Development - Plan and create new exhibits for the museum. We try to have new temporary exhibits that rotate every three months.

Now is the time for all good members to come to the aid of the Society!

4. Special Event Committee - A major fund raising event is being planned for March 2010. The current plan is for it to be an evening music concert. This is one of the projects that will ensure that the organization is self-sustaining. This event will require numerous volunteers assigned to various subcommittees. If you have planned a reunion or a wedding you are a perfect candidate for this committee.
5. Program Committee - Members are needed to plan and coordinate the monthly programs for the coming year. You will share the responsibility as the "lead" for several program presenters to ensure all details are coordinated. If you have ideas for programs we welcome your input.
6. Membership Committee

- Assist in recruiting new members. Our membership needs to grow as we move ahead with our expanding goals.

7. Permanent Facility Planning Committee - Assist in the planning and coordinating of the permanent museum.

If you have interest in architecture or interior design this is the job for you.

8. Society Board - We will have several vacancies on the LHS Board this year with elections in October. Consider this job if you have leadership skills and want a challenge.

I really want each of you to think seriously about how you can help the Society, using the talents you already have and the experience you have already gained. Your commitment and active involvement are what makes it YOUR Society. Anything worth pursuing takes effort. I look forward to hearing from you.

Please call Becky at 253-582-8682 or e-mail craftyhubers@comcast.net to let me know what job you'd like to help with or if you have questions.

Lakewood Historical Society

New Members, New Donors & Financial Report - June 30, 2009

Donations

YTD thru 6/30/09

\$14,375

Donors since

Spring 2009 Newsletter

Jeff Brown, BCRA Design, Inc
 Karol Brown
 Comcast
 Ann Davis
 Daughters of Pioneers –
 Steilacoom Chapter #10

Rhona Diehl
 Carl and Ingrid Fynboe
 Ray & Janice Graves: memory
 of Maria “Bebita” Griffin
 George and Geneva Hamill

Royce and Jenny Hansen
 LTG (Ret) Bill Harrison
 Samuel G. Hewston
 Rebecca and John Huber
 William Lee Jackson

Rose Corey Jetter
 Diane M. Johnson
 Verna J. Karlson
 May Ann Miller
 Andrea Moawad

Clark and Sharon Montgomery
 D. J. and Carol Moreno
 L. T. Murray, Jr
 Alice Peeples
 Prairie Schooners – Little
 Church on the Prairie

Robin and Linda Rego

Don and Katherine Russell
 Fred and Louise Schumock
 Sue Scott
 Glen and Marlene Spieth,
 Boeing Co. Matching Fund

Irwin Sternberg
 Molly M. Tuohy
 Judy Turcotte
 Gregg and Stephanie Walsh

New members since Spring ‘09 Newsletter

Harold Allen
 Sandra K. Anderson
 Greg, Trudy and Cindy Baxter
 Kathleen Benoun
 Jeff Brown, BCRA Design, Inc
 Anita Fries
 David Garbush
 William E. and Virginia Greco
 Karen Hamilton
 Lynn Hamilton
 William Lee Jackson

Sally Carman Lefebber family
 Eugene K. Maun
 Barbara and John Michener
 L. T. Murray Jr,
 Murray Pacific Corporation
 Dr. Jerry Ramsey
 Donna Raymond
 Robin and Linda Rego
 Lisa Carman Rohrback
 Susan Wiley

LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY Financial Statement 6 months YTD thru June 2009

Cash on Hand 12/31/ 2008 \$ 8,171.07

Income

Grants	\$ 3,607.50
Membership dues	\$ 4,670.00
Contributions	\$14,375.00
Other	\$ <u>437.60</u>
Total	\$23,090.10

Expenses

Operations/ Admin	\$ 3,423.53
Contract Services	\$ 6,255.00
Museum Lease	\$12,000.00
Marketing & Publicity	\$ <u>4,729.23</u>
Total	\$26,397.76

Cash on Hand – end of June \$ 4,863.41

Programs for Summer 2009

Tues, July 21st, 2009, 6-8:30 pm, “History of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club”

At the Tacoma Country and Golf Club, 13204 Country Club Drive SW, Lakewood.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity to be a guest at the oldest country club west of the Mississippi started in 1894. This special evening starts with light hors d’oeuvres and a no host bar (members- \$10, non-members- \$15). Following the program will be a tour of the facility. The public is welcome.

Tues, Aug 18th, 2 pm “ History and Tour of Silcox Island on American Lake,”

Silcox Island, transport to the island will be arranged.

Granddaughter of Albert Silcox, will provide a tour of the island. Refreshments will be provided.

This is a MEMBERS ONLY event.

Tues, Sept 15th, 7 pm “Shadows, Glorious Shadows: The Life of John McLoughlin,”

Lakewood Library, 6300 Wildaire Rd SW, Lakewood.

Jerry Echrom will portray Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Columbia Fur District for Hudson’s Bay Company. He resigned in 1846 to the Oregon Territory and became a US citizen in 1849. The public is welcome.

Lakewood Historical Society
P.O. Box 98014
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